



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Howard Denis

For Immediate Release

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STATEMENT BY COUNCILMEMBER HOWARD A. DENIS ON THE RESOLUTION TO OPPOSE SLOTS

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I am strongly opposed to the Resolution opposing slots before us today. If the Resolution were in support of slots, I would similarly oppose it.

What I strongly believe is that it is extremely unwise for the County Council or County Executive to remove slots as an option for the State to consider as a possible revenue source.

We all understand that Montgomery County has acute fiscal needs, particularly for education, that additional revenue sources could provide. We can trust our Montgomery County delegates and senators, closer to the big budget picture than we are, to seek the compromises that will be necessary to meet these needs.

The Resolution before the County Council ties their hands, highlights differences when we are striving for unity, puts them on the spot, marginalizes Montgomery County, re-enforces negative images, and basically sacrifices our best interest, and is gratuitous.

Having served in the State Senate, I know how sensitive and complex the present moment is, and how easy it is to be inflexible.

The same issues raised in this Resolution were raised when the State Lottery was enacted many years ago. Today, the State does more than permit a lottery – we advertise and promote it! The Lottery nets over a million dollars a day for the state. Imagine how high taxes would be right now to provide the same level of services if there were no lottery!

And what about Thornton education funding?

If we could fund Thornton without slots, I would support it. If we could fund Thornton with slots, I would support it. And if we could fund Thornton with a combination of fewer slots and fewer taxes, I would support that too!

Montgomery County (and it seems to me the rest of Maryland as well) needs the extra education money Thornton provides just to break even!

Montgomery County is a relatively affluent county. Imagine the plight of the less affluent! We should not imperiously tell those subdivisions, who support slots and support Thornton, that we are going to as a matter of doctrine stand in their schoolhouse door. Right now it appears that in Annapolis the reality is: no slots no Thornton!

If there is less education money than promised, the less affluent counties will have a stronger claim on the dwindling resources than Montgomery County. Result: Montgomery County will lose. We will likely face cuts. The only chance Montgomery County has to get a fair slice of the pie is if there is a bigger pie!

The Council's voice is important on this issue; otherwise this resolution would not have generated as much concern in the Delegation as it has. If we're going to have a County Council Resolution articulating our position, we should be urging the major stakeholders in Annapolis to compromise!

With this in mind, I am opposed to the Resolution and intend to vote against it.

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